Situations of Al-Majiri School, Gagi, Sokoto: Its Achievements and Challenges from Inception to Date

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I. INTRODUCTION

Al-majiri Education Programme is a programme designed to cater for the Almajirai who are out-of-school in Northern Nigerian states, the programme is aimed at integrating traditional Qur'anic schools and western education under Universal Basic Education Commission. The establishment of Al-majiri Integrated Education is one of the current issues that required special intervention from the governments at all levels to take measures to curtail the menace of street begging, drug abuse, child trafficking, of children and youth in the name of pursuing Qur’anic Education. The Al-majiri (Itinerant Qur’anic School pupils) constitutes the largest group of out-of-school children in Nigeria numbering over nine (9) million children.¹ This segment of Nigerian population poses tremendous challenges to attainment of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The objective of the programme is to:

1. Provide access and equity to Basic Education for all Almajiri school age children;
2. Discourage and gradually eliminate itinerancy for all Almajiri in the country; and
3. Support the emergency of an enabling environment that could facilitate the effective integration of Islamic discipline into Basic Education Programme.²

The word “Al-majiri” is derived from the Arabic word “Almuhajir” Migrant the plural is “Almuhajirun” Migrants. It refers to a traditional method of learning and memorizing Qur’an among Hausa/Fulani communities, where children of varying age are sent out by their parents or guardians far away villages, towns and cities for Qur’anic education under care of Islamic scholar called Malam.³ This Qur’anic traditional system of education becomes an issue of concern national and international bodies over years. This is due to it negative effects on the lives and social wellbeing of Almajira who become vulnerable to many social and moral vices as well breeding centre of agents of insecurity in the country and neighbouring hood. Hence the issue of Al-majiri becomes serious issue of national and international this because to tackle insecurity in the nation, especially the North Eastern part of Nigeria, where is the centre of Boko Haram insurgency activities. In addition to that Taiwo⁴ pointed out that a recent report shown that there are more than 10 million Al-majiri on the streets of Northern Nigeria, without formal education and invariably going to face black future.

The Nigeria under leadership of the late President, Alh. Umar Musa Yar Adu’a had observed that the Northern Nigeria was left behind in terms of Western education, because, some parents prepared to educate their children Islamic education without much care with western education. As a result some scholars advocate for integrating Islamic education and Western education together, so as to minimise fear from the parents. In this regard the late president Alh. Umaru Musa Yar Adu’a was the first President to make an attempt to establish Al-majiri school in order to curtail the menace of Al-majiri activities.

II. HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF AL-MAJIRI SCHOOL IN SOKOTO STATE

The Al-majiri education system has been established many centuries ago. It is semi formal system of Qur’anic education in which children, mostly boys are sent by their parents to take up residence with Islamic Mallams for instruction in the Qur’anic and other Islamic texts⁵. Traditionally, children would be sent to places far away from their parents, where they would be under the custody of a malam to acquire religious knowledge while also learning to fend for themselves. They would beg for alms or serve in their teachers farms as a means of compensation for their religious

² Ibid
education and upbringing\textsuperscript{4}. Furthermore, Islam teaches great importance to knowledge and considers it the basis of human development and key to the growth of culture and civilization. So, the main aim and objectives is to enable one to live a life of good Muslim, benefit himself and his society\textsuperscript{7}.

The establishment of Al-majiri Integrated School in Sokoto State will be link to the establishment of Islamic schools in Sokoto which was originated since the coming of Islam in northern Nigeria through traders and preachers. It is in this time Islamic scholarship has its origin / background in Sokoto state. Though during the time learning process undergoes through MakarantarAllo were a teacher will provide a center of learning (MakarantarAllo) in his residence or any place within his area where he teach the students Arabic Alphabets and followed by Qur’anic reading. After the completion of the Qur’anic recitation known as (sauka) the student will proceed to learning different Islamic sciences such as Islamic jurist prudence, Islamic creed, Arabic grammar and Arabic poems etc. this is how the situation is until the emergence of the reformer shiekh Usmanu ibn Fodiyo\textsuperscript{6}. In 1903 the colonial masters gave birth to a new system of learning where a student will sit down on a desk in a class room while the teacher will remain standing teaching the student, therefore the prominent scholars at that time such as Alhaji Muhammad Marafa Dan Baba used the same method (colonial master method of teaching) to establish Islamiyyah schools in Sokoto popularly known as Nizamiyyah in 1965, where Arabic and Islamic studies were taught (Ma’ahadal-Ilmi). Through this system learning Arabic language was disseminated to all nook and cranny of Sokoto as primary level and whoever graduated from this school can further his education to secondary level with this certificate. Furthermore, many students were graduated from the school some are indigenes while others are from neighbouring areas such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Katsina, and even from Niger republic\textsuperscript{9}.

Consequently, some of the students of this school were sent to Arab countries in order to advance their studies in Arabic and Islamic studies. The achievements of this school (ma’aahadullIlmi) resulted in the creation of many Islamiyyah schools in different areas of Sokoto state like MarhumuNata’ala Asada Sokoto, Sidi Mamman Institute, Islamiyyah Rungumi and Mas’udiyahmarafa Dan Baba e.t.c.

Therefore, for the future development and social wellbeing of Almajirai who become vulnerable to many social and moral vices as well as breeding centre for agents of insecurity in the country and neighbourhood? Successive Governments made several attempts to tackle this issue. In 2012 the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan commissioned Al-majiri School Gagi in Sokoto State in his own effort to address Al-majiri Phenomenon in the Northern states, which is aimed at curbing social, economic and security challenges in the country\textsuperscript{10}. Since then some state implement this programme into their states. Therefore, in order realize Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Therefore to curb the number of out-of-school children, the programme should be implemented effectively in all Northern states.

The school was established with 50 males students with six teaching staff, to teach pupils areas assigned in the Time Table, the school was designed as a Boarding school. From there the school begins running its educational activities, the school was gradually improved from primary one (1) up to primary six (6). The school was successfully graduated its first set this year\textsuperscript{11}. Moreover, the school from inception to date is running all primary courses including English, Math and computer studies.

III. CONDITION AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF AL-MAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

The Al-majiri School, Gagi was situated at Gagi area in Sokoto metropolis, Sokoto State. The school was built at the standard level provided with adequate facilities such as adequate classrooms, students’ hostel, staff quarters, adequate toilets and bathrooms, computer laboratory, language laboratory, science laboratory, Clinical, sport fields, adequate water supply etc. as specified by National School Health Policy. The school was fenced with building for security purpose to the staff and students. The school population is gradually improved from fifty (50) students to two hundred plus. The Al-majiri School, Gagi is the best Al-majiri School in Sokoto in terms of structure and organisation. However, Al-majiri School, Gagi is provided with adequate teaching and learning materials, students are provided with school’s uniforms free of charge in addition students are provided with three square meals daily.

The organizational structure of Almaajiri Schools in Sokoto State varied from one Almaajiri schools to another depending on the proprietor of the school. Almaajiri School Gagi in particular is governed and run by the government under State Universal Education Board (SUBEB). The Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in collaboration with SUBEB has the responsibilities of appointing and

\textsuperscript{4}U. A. Nasarawa, Attitudes of almajiri schools’ proprietors/teachers towards the integration of almajiri education in Sokoto North and South Local Governments Areas of Sokoto State. A paper presented at the 38th Annual International Conference of the Counseling Association of Nigeria held at Ibom Hall IBB Uyo, 2013.


\textsuperscript{7}Ibid


\textsuperscript{9}Oral interview Hussaini Abdullah. 45 years Principal Al-majiri School, Gagi, Sokoto, 28, July, 2017.
posting administrators of Almajiri School Gagi in the Sokoto State, it also has the responsibilities of recruiting and posting teaching and supporting staff to these schools. Furthermore, SUBEB and LGEAs have the responsibilities of supervisions and inspection of Almajiri School Gagi as well as provision and maintenance of school facilities such as buildings facilities, furniture facilities, teaching and learning materials etc.\textsuperscript{12}

Principal is the executive administrator of Almajiri School Gagi in Sokoto State, he supervises both staff and students to ensure that everybody is doing the right thing at the right time. He also acts as middle amongst SUBEB, LGEA and the staff in his school, control school records, finance and ensure teaching and learning environment is conducive.\textsuperscript{13} The Principal also has the responsibility of planning, coordinating, organising and reporting school activities.

IV. CURRICULUM OF STUDY IN ALMAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

It’s know that since 1960 to date the some Northern Nigeria are sceptical with the Western Education, as a result they give priority to Islamic knowledge, in this regard our elders and leader of that time like Ahmad Bello Sardauna of Sokoto, they deemed it necessary to integrate Islamic education and Western education together in order to ensure that children from Northern Nigeria benefitted from Western education so that they might not be left behind. Many influential personalities particularly in Sokoto State were influenced by this idea among whom is Ahmadu Dan Baba who established the first Nizamiyya school in 1960, where both Islamic and western are taught together. Furthermore, some prominent people in Sokoto participated in the system and contributed immensely towards the establishing and financing Nizamiyya Islamiyya schools in Sokoto State, among which are former President Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, Malam Sani Dingyadi, Sheikh Sidi Attahir, and Professor Ibrahim Makwashe of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, etc.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, the forum of Jama’atuNasarul Islam was founded which paved the way for the establishment of some Nizamiyya schools in then Sokoto State, one in Gwandu, Argungu and Yauri respectively. From this system of Nizamiyya schools, the Almajiri School Gagi developed its curriculum which is akin to the curriculum and method of Nizamiyya School but with additional features.

AZaure programme was added to the Almajiri School curriculum which based on the traditional method of learning and teaching Islamic knowledge in a room or recitation hall where Almajiri students gathered to received their Qur’anic studies in one umbrella, with a particular method. Those that did not memorize the Holy Qur’an used to memorise some verses (Harda) under the care of their teacher known as Malam, when Malam is satisfied with their student’s mastery of the particular portion of the Qur’an he will instruct him to write other new verses for memorisation. However, for those who memorized the Holy Qur’an and graduated from this level known as al-Ifada’iyah and become Malam they will proceed to the secondary level of this type of education known Karatun sani, where they will learn different books of different fields form their Malam. In Al-majiri School Gagi the system of Zaure programme began around 6:30am to 8:30am the student gathered in one place or different room and reading the Qur’an, hadith, fiqhu, Tawheed, (SirrHa) Biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (peace be upon him and some companions like Abubakar, Umar, Uthman And Aliyu etc. After Zahr prayer Zaure teachers will come back for the second time, to teach the students and continue with the teaching till 4:00pm when the students will go back to their hostel and rest till Magrib prayer, from their they will take their dinner and go to the hostel for sleeping. Moreover, in Al-majiri School, Gagi curriculum the students learn some basic skills acquisition during weekend. Among the skills were computer studies, tailoring, carpentry works, etc.\textsuperscript{16}

V. ACHIEVEMENTS OF AL-MAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

Al-majiri School, Gagi made a tremendous achievements towards the actualisation of access and equity to basic education for almajiri school age children and integration of traditional Islamic education into basic education programme and to ensure education for all. Particularly, Almajiri School, Gagi made significance role in the enrolment of Almajiri students in the state. Initially the school started with very limited number of fifty almajiri students across the 23 Local Governments in the state, comprising only male students. The school started with minimum number of fifty students and five teaching staff, but school has gradually improved its enrolment in terms of students, teaching and supporting staff. The number of students increased from fifty students to two hundred plus, from five teachers to twenty three teaching staff, eleven supporting staff, six clinic staff and one laboratory attendant. The table I below shows the current students’ enrolment of Al-majiri School, Gagi, Sokoto:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Number of Students & Number of Teachers \\
\hline
2010 & 50 & 5 \\
2011 & 100 & 10 \\
2012 & 150 & 15 \\
2013 & 200 & 20 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Current Students’ Enrolment of Almajiri School, Gagi, Sokoto}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid Pp 3.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid Pp 3.
One of its remarkable achievements is that the school was established with 50 students and now have two hundred and sixty students, out of which fifty students of it first seat graduated this year 2017. With Development the school contributes a lot in upgrading Islamic and western education in Sokoto State.

Beside that the Almajiri School, Gagi helps in transforming the life of its students from the life of street begging and security threats to the real students’ life in the state by reducing the number of streets almajiri who pose economic and security threats in Sokoto State. It also helps in transforming almajiri students economically by training its students with basic entrepreneur skills acquisitions, such as computer studies, carpentry works, tailoring, etc. In every weekend students of Almajiri School, Gagi are engage with various skills acquisitions, so that at end of the programme even without government’s job then can be self-employed through entrepreneur ship.

VI. CHALLENGES OF ALMAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

Almajiri School, Gagi in particular like any other Almajiri school, it faces some challenges which undermined its activities towards the realisation of the goals of almajiri education in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include:

1. Misconception about the Al-majiri Education Programme

There are misconception about the need or otherwise of almajiri education programme among society, elites and political leaders in Northern Nigeria. Some advocate for the programme while some sees it as encouraging activities which will not help to curtail this undesirable attitudes among Hausa/Fulani.). Another threatening problem is lack consensus among stakeholders of almajiri education on the needs of integrated almajiri education system in Nigeria. Kumolu report that a practice that President Good luck Jonathan recently commissioned is described as “dangerous to national development,” the Almajiri tradition has once again occupied most national discourse, especially with the recent introduction of Almajiri Model Education by the Federal Government. Niger State Governor and Chairman of the Northern Governors’ Forum, Dr. Babangida Aliyu, had at a recent forum, admitted that:

“The system of Almajiri served a good purpose in the past...but we have passed that stage now. We have now reached a situation with respect to Almajiri where we have to be ‘wicked’ in order to be good to ourselves. We must say, ‘No,’ to this system and then work out how to integrate those (Almajiris) properly.” (kumolu, 2012 Pp.1-2).

Such perception discourages the efforts of government and other individuals toward almajiri education programme. However, this assertion fails to realise the increasing number of almajiri on the streets of Nigeria, as well as the right of every Nigerian child to basic education irrespective of their status, or backgrounds, which was enshrined in the Nigerian philosophy of education which stipulates equal educational opportunity to all citizens irrespective of their physical or mental disabilities. As well as Millennium Development Goals which advocate for education for all and health for all, and this could not be achieved without educating these streets baggers (almajirrai).

2. Poor Enrolment

Despite the number of almajiri within and outside Sokoto metropolis which is up to thousands, the Almajiri School, Gagi is able to enrolled only two hundred plus almajiri students to date, which is insignificance as compared to the number of almajiri on streets of Sokoto State. From the students data enrolment of Almajiri School, Gagi it shown that the maximum number of students admitted into this school each year doesn’t exceed fifty students, despite that many almajiri parents want enrol their children into this school but they were denied due to the limited number of students to be admitted into Almajiri School, Gagi.

3. Poor Implementation of the Programme

The Al-majiri School, Gagi was constructed established by the Federal Government, but the school was handed over to the state, while the state handed it over to Local Government Education Authority under the supervision of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). This is against the initial plan of almajiri education programme, and also limited the activities of the programme. For almajiri programme to succeed is not one man’s job, therefore government at all levels needs to intensify their efforts towards it, in order to actualise the goals of almajiri education in Nigeria.

4. Inadequate Funding

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17 Ibid. Pp. 5
19 Ibid Pp. 11
Funding is a critical issue in Nigerian education system, for almajiri education programme to succeed there is need of huge amount of money to be injected to support the programme effectively. Inadequate funding is one of the challenges of Al-majiri School, Gagi, and the main source funding this school State Government through the Local Government Education Authority which is grossly inadequate to cater for the need of expansion. The school needs to expand its facilities so as to accommodate more students and staff due to the population of al-majiri in the state.

VII. CONCLUSION

Al-majiri School, Gagi is the first al-majiri school founded in Nigeria and best of its types particularly in Sokoto State. This school played a significant role in transforming the life of al-majiri children socially, morally, religiously, and economically. Therefore, based on the proliferation of al-majiri activities Northern Nigeria and particularly in Sokoto State which was triggered by the current economic hardship, superstitions and beliefs as well as the right of these vulnerable al-majiri children to equal educational opportunity irrespective of their physical or mental disabilities, al-majiri education should be maintained, improved and make compulsory for all al-majiri in the state.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Northern leaders, elites and political figures should have a common consensus on the need of al-majiri education in Northern Nigeria and speak with one voice towards the realisation of Millennium Development Goals which stipulates education for all and health for all in the region, in order to face reality of this al-majiri epidemic among Hausa/Fulani communities.

2. Facilities of Al-majiri School, Gagi should be increased and expanded to the extent that it can accommodate many al-majiri students as compared to their population in the state. Many of this type of school should be established in each Local Government. Government should ensure that only al-majiri children are admitted into these schools.

3. The activities of Al-majiri School, Gagi need to be reviewed extensively so as to meet the current challenges of this programme for effective implementation of the programme.

4. For the successful implementation of al-majiri education programme in Nigeria and Sokoto State in particular, there should be adequate funding for the programme. As thus government at all levels, NGOs and other individuals should intensify their effort in funding this programme. Money allocated to the programme should be used judiciously.